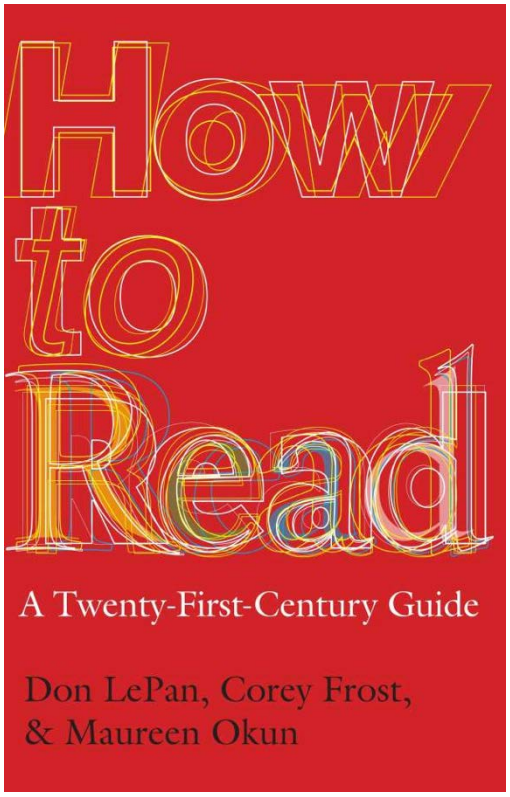
Additional Case Studies



Don LePan, Corey Frost, and Maureen Okun

Case Study (9): Archaic Language

What can modern readers make of a sentence such as this: “You know I don’t mind in the least for the road.” In isolation it’s a puzzling turn of phrase, even for many experienced readers. But in context, as here, in a passage from *The Doctor’s Family* (an 1863 novel by English writer Margaret Oliphant), it’s possible even for readers quite unfamiliar with nineteenth-century English idioms to infer the meaning. Dr. Edward Rider has just come across his sister-in-law, Nettie Underwood, carrying some packages as she walks along the road at night:

> “… I am surprised to find Miss Underwood walking so late. This is not a road for a lady by herself.”
>
> “You know I don’t mind in the least for the road,” said Nettie.…

How would you express “You know I don’t mind in the least for the road” in modern, idiomatic English?

Now, let’s look at Nettie Underwood’s remark in the context of the full paragraph in which it appears:

> “… But I am surprised to find Miss Underwood walking so late. This is not a road for a lady by herself.”
>
> “You know I don’t mind in the least for the road,” said Nettie, with a little indignation. “How wonderfully cross you are sometimes! If you are going as far as the cottage,” she added, with a little sigh of fatigue, “will you please carry some of these things for me! I could not get out sooner, I have been so busy today. It is wonderful how much needlework it takes to keep three children going, and how many little jobs there are to do. If you take this parcel, carry it carefully, please: it is something for my bonnet. There! Don’t be absurd. I am quite able to walk by myself, thank you—I’d rather, please!”

Following Up

1) Since the first half of the twentieth century the adjective *wonderful* and the adverb *wonderfully* have carried positive connotations. Something wonderful may be surprising, unusual, or remarkable, but always in a good way. Is that the case in this passage (in which both *wonderfully* and *wonderful* make an appearance)? What can you infer that *wonderfully* and *wonderful* mean here? What leads you to that conclusion?

2) The word *cross* is used here in a way that was very common in the mid-nineteenth century but that has largely died out today. Which of the following do you think it might mean?

stern
ill tempered, irritable
domineering, patriarchal
unpredictable

Look up in a dictionary the various meanings for “cross,” used as an adjective.

3) The word *cottage* can denote a number of things. Which of these meanings do you think applies here? Why?

   small, unpretentious house
   rustic summer home, especially one located on a body of water
   hut or shed

4) Why do you think Nettie might feel slightly indignant in response to Dr. Rider’s remark?

5) What is a modern word for what Nettie calls “needlework”? What can you infer is enclosed in the packages she is carrying? What leads you to that conclusion?

6) Readers can infer that Dr. Rider says or does something in between Nettie saying “There!” and Nettie saying “Don’t be absurd.” What can we infer that the Doctor has said or done? Why do you think Oliphant chose to omit specific mention of what he said or did?

Case Study (10): Non-Fiction

The essay below was posted on the blog of one of the *How to Read* authors on 17 July 2017. Dee Gordon (later Dee Strange-Gordon) was a major league baseball player from 2011 to 2021, playing for the Los Angeles Dodgers, the Miami Marlins, the Seattle Mariners, and finally the Washington Nationals.

The Strategy Behind Tonight's Walk-Off Win by Dee Gordon and the Marlins

Baseball is a game of strategy, but if you always stick with the same strategy you become predictable—and your team loses. A textbook example of the importance of flexibility in forming strategy occurred today in extra innings in Miami. With the game tied in the bottom of the ninth the Marlins had had the bases loaded, and couldn't score. In the top of the tenth the Phillies had had the bases loaded, and couldn't score. Now, in the bottom of the tenth, and with two out, the Marlins again had the bases loaded. My baseball hero, Dee Gordon, was coming to the plate. Dee is a poster boy of small ball; his game is beating out the throw to first, and then stealing a base, and then when the throw from the catcher or the pitcher goes astray, taking another base on the error.[1] But infield hits are harder to come by when the bases are loaded with two out and the defense is playing five infielders.

That's where you need strategy—and, if I may be immodest for a moment, that's where I come into the picture.

For weeks I've been fine-tuning strategy with my two Miami Marlins hats; I wore the beige hat with the bright red and yellow and blue logo when I saw the Marlins play two games in Milwaukee a couple of weeks ago; they lost, so for a few days I switched to the dark grey/light grey hat. When that strategy backfired I went back to the beige hat—and the Marlins responded with a string of wins going into the All-Star break. I had to switch again when the Dodgers beat the Marlins last Friday—but the switch proved ineffective. I switched to the beige again on Sunday; that wasn't working either.

Back to tonight. I had put the grey hat on as the game went to the bottom of the ninth. But that hadn't done the trick in the ninth; how best to deal with this crucially important opportunity now, in the bottom of the tenth?

[1] Fans love stolen bases (and bunt singles, and going first to third on a another player's single, and scoring from first on another player's double, and all the other manifestations of speed on the base-paths), but for many years now baseball's conventional wisdom has underrated the value of speed—in large part, I would suggest, because it's difficult for statistics to capture its disruptive impact; when a Dee Gordon or a Billy Hamilton is on base, pitchers are distracted, fielders tense up—and the defense makes mistakes (many of which are not egregious enough to show up in the box score as errors, but can still cost a base or a run).

Dee was down a strike after the first pitch—and that's when it came to me. I grabbed the beige Marlins hat and put it on—right on top of my double grey Marlins hat. And presto—on the very next pitch Dee lined a run-scoring single to right. Walk off win for the Fish!

Now I don't want to take all the credit for this; many events have more than one cause, and I have to believe this was one of them. The quality of the pitch, the placement of the Phillies outfielders, the strategy of Marlins' manager Don Mattingly and of the Marlins' coaching staff—all these probably played a part. Dee's own skill may have had something to do with it. But it would be absurd to claim that the hat strategy wasn't also in this case a contributing cause. I'm waiting now for Don and for Dee to be in touch—to say thanks, of course, but also to advise me on how often I should resort to the two-hat strategy in the future. Should it be reserved for these sorts of game-on-the-line crisis moments? Or should there be a place for it in everyday strategy?



The actual two hats used during the 17 July 2017 game at which the dual-hat strategy debuted.

* * *

As a nine-year old I'm sure something close to one half of my mind was persuaded that I really could influence the outcome of far-away hockey games by putting on a Montreal Canadiens jersey. The equivalent percentage now is down to—what? Perhaps an eighth or a tenth of my mind? But like so many humans, I'm loath to give up that 1/8th or 1/10th. It would be like letting go completely of the child within. And who wants to do that—even at the ripe old age of 63? Go Fish Go! I'll do what I can to help.

Following Up

1) What is the main point of the post? How can you tell?

2) How far does the reader need to go in the piece to discover its main point? What effect on the reader's experience of the post does the positioning of the main point have?

3) How much of what is happening in the baseball game do you think can be understood through inference, even by those who are not familiar with the game of baseball?

4) [for those not familiar with the game of baseball] Did you look up any of the baseball jargon? If you did look up any of the baseball jargon, to what extent, if any, did what you found help you to understand the post as a whole?

5) Is it in fact necessary to have *any* knowledge of the game of baseball to appreciate the main point(s) being made here?

6) What parts of the narrative would you say are literal descriptions of the narrative of a baseball game? What parts strike you as pure fantasy?

7) When is the narration straightforward and the tone neutral, and when is the tone tongue-in-cheek? How can you tell?

8) Do you think that the photograph of the hats adds to the effectiveness of this piece of writing? Can you explain how? Or do you feel that the photo acts in some way as a distraction, and to some degree detracts from the essay's impact?

Case Study (11): Difficult Fiction (2)

Before reading this case study, we recommend that you read Case Study 2, Case Study 3, and Case Study 8 in the body of the book.

E.M. Forster's early twentieth-century fiction deals largely with the nuances of social interactions within genteel (though not wealthy or aristocratic) segments of British society, and sometimes also with interactions between members of different social classes. Forster's tone is subtle and often gently ironic; it's been described as highly insightful and highly amusing by those who have some familiarity with the nuances of social interaction it details. But both the subject matter and the tone of Forster's fiction may present barriers to understanding for young people in the twenty-first century.

This case study presents two passages from Forster's 1908 novel *A Room with a View*. The protagonist of the novel, a young woman from England, is visiting the Italian city of Florence—then, as now, a cultural mecca. Lucy is staying at the Pension Bertolini, accompanied by her older cousin, Charlotte Bartlett; the pension offers modest but respectable accommodations, suitable for respectable ladies of limited means. Also staying at the pension are a Mr. Emerson and his son George, who are of a different social class than Lucy and Charlotte; the Emersons are far more direct in their expressions of feeling, and far less bound by social niceties than are Lucy and Charlotte (or, indeed, than are the other guests at the pension).

The straitlaced Charlotte acts as Lucy's chaperone—but Lucy longs to experience Florence on her own, unmediated by her cousin's preferences and prejudices. The following passage appears at the beginning of the novel's second chapter.

from Chapter 2

> It was pleasant to wake up in Florence, to open the eyes upon a bright bare room, with a floor of red tiles which look clean though they are not; with a painted ceiling whereon pink griffins and blue amorini sport in a forest of yellow violins and bassoons. It was pleasant, too, to fling wide the windows, pinching the fingers in unfamiliar fastenings, to lean out into sunshine with beautiful hills and trees and marble churches opposite, and close below, the Arno, gurgling against the embankment of the road.
>
> Over the river men were at work with spades and sieves on the sandy foreshore, and on the river was a boat, also diligently employed for some mysterious end. An electric tram came rushing underneath the window. No one was inside it, except one tourist; but its platforms were overflowing with Italians, who preferred to stand. Children tried to hang on behind, and the conductor, with no malice, spat in their faces to make them let go. Then soldiers appeared—good-looking, undersized men—wearing each a knapsack covered with mangy fur, and a great-coat which had been cut for some larger soldier. Beside them walked officers, looking foolish and fierce, and before them went little boys, turning somersaults in time with the band. The tramcar became entangled in their ranks,

and moved on painfully, like a caterpillar in a swarm of ants. One of the little boys fell down, and some white bullocks came out of an archway. Indeed, if it had not been for the good advice of an old man who was selling button-hooks, the road might never have got clear.

Over such trivialities as these many a valuable hour may slip away, and the traveller who has gone to Italy to study the tactile values of Giotto, or the corruption of the Papacy, may return remembering nothing but the blue sky and the men and women who live under it. So it was as well that Miss Bartlett should tap and come in, and having commented on Lucy's leaving the door unlocked, and on her leaning out of the window before she was fully dressed, should urge her to hasten herself, or the best of the day would be gone. By the time Lucy was ready her cousin had done her breakfast, and was listening to [another guest in the dining room].

A conversation then ensued, on not unfamiliar lines. Miss Bartlett was, after all, a wee bit tired, and thought they had better spend the morning settling in; unless Lucy would at all like to go out? Lucy would rather like to go out, as it was her first day in Florence, but, of course, she could go alone. Miss Bartlett could not allow this. Of course she would accompany Lucy everywhere. Oh, certainly not; Lucy would stop with her cousin. Oh, no! that would never do.

Following Up

1) In opening the chapter, Forster writes "It was pleasant to wake up in Florence, to open the eyes upon …" (rather than "Lucy found it pleasant to wake up in Florence, to open her eyes upon …"). What effect does this opening have on your perception of the scene? Why do you think the author has chosen to de-personalize the viewing of the scene in this way?

2) How, in reading this passage, can you infer the name of the river that runs through Florence?

3) In all probability, some of the words used in the second paragraph to describe the scene will be unfamiliar to you; do you nevertheless have some sense of the scene? Choose two or three adjectives with which to describe the *feel* of the scene.

4) What (if any) words unfamiliar to you did you feel you needed to look up in order to understand the scene being described? Did you notice any familiar words that may seem here to be used in unfamiliar ways? (What is a *platform* on a tram, for example? What does Miss Bartlett *tap* in the third paragraph? What does the verb *stop* in the final paragraph mean?)

5) A simpler way to have expressed the sense of "the traveller who has gone to Italy to study the tactile values of Giotto, or the corruption of the Papacy" in the first sentence of the third paragraph would have been to write "the traveller who has gone to Italy to study history and art history." What effect does the specificity of the examples Forster has chosen have on the reader?

6) That same sentence begins with an assertion by the author (or the authorial voice): “Over such trivialities as these many a valuable hour may slip away.” Do you think Forster himself believes that studying history and art history is more “valuable” than experiencing “the blue sky and the men and women who live under it”? Do you think he believes it was indeed fortunate that Miss Bartlett arrived to interrupt Lucy’s enjoyment of the street life of Florence? Or is the authorial voice in this case an ironic one? How does the way we read this entire passage differ, depending on whether we take the tone here to be ironic or not?

7) Reading between the lines, what do you think is being suggested about the character of Charlotte Bartlett in the final paragraph of this passage?

8) Write out that final paragraph as dialogue, using quotation marks and starting a new paragraph for each new speaker. How (if at all) does presenting the exchange in this way change the feel of it for the reader?

The second passage is from Chapter 4 of the novel. As the passage begins, Lucy and Charlotte have already been in Florence for some days; Lucy has managed to go for a walk on her own, and has purchased some photographs. She is walking through a part of the city famous for its public statues.

from Chapter 4

> “Nothing ever happens to me,” she reflected, as she entered the Piazza Signoria and looked nonchalantly at its marvels, now fairly familiar to her. The great square was in shadow; the sunshine had come too late to strike it. Neptune was already unsubstantial in the twilight, half god, half ghost, and his fountain plashed dreamily to the men and satyrs who idled together on its marge. The Loggia showed as the triple entrance of a cave, wherein dwelt many a deity, shadowy, but immortal, looking forth upon the arrivals and departures of mankind. It was the hour of unreality—the hour, that is, when unfamiliar things are real. An older person at such an hour and in such a place might think that sufficient was happening to him, and rest content. Lucy desired more.
>
> She fixed her eyes wistfully on the tower of the palace, which rose out of the lower darkness like a pillar of roughened gold. It seemed no longer a tower, no longer supported by earth, but some unattainable treasure throbbing in the tranquil sky. Its brightness mesmerized her, still dancing before her eyes when she bent them to the ground and started towards home.
>
> Then something did happen.
>
> Two Italians by the Loggia had been bickering about a debt. “Cinque lire,” they had cried, “cinque lire!” They sparred at each other, and one of them was hit lightly upon the chest. He frowned; he bent towards Lucy with a look of interest, as if he had an important

message for her. He opened his lips to deliver it, and a stream of red came out between them and trickled down his unshaven chin.

That was all. A crowd rose out of the dusk. It hid this extraordinary man from her, and bore him away to the fountain. Mr. George Emerson happened to be a few paces away, looking at her across the spot where the man had been. How very odd! Across something. Even as she caught sight of him, he grew dim; the palace itself grew dim, swayed above her, fell on to her softly, slowly, noiselessly, and the sky fell with it.

She thought: "Oh, what have I done?"

"Oh, what have I done?" she murmured, and opened her eyes.

George Emerson still looked at her, but not across anything. She had complained of dullness, and lo! one man was stabbed, and another held her in his arms.

They were sitting on some steps in the Uffizi Arcade. He must have carried her. He rose when she spoke, and began to dust his knees. She repeated:

"Oh, what have I done?"

"You fainted."

"I—I am very sorry."

"How are you now?"

"Perfectly well—absolutely well." And she began to nod and smile.

"Then let us come home. There's no point in our stopping."

He held out his hand to pull her up. She pretended not to see it. The cries from the fountain—they had never ceased—rang emptily. The whole world seemed pale and void of its original meaning.

"How very kind you have been! I might have hurt myself falling. But now I am well. I can go alone, thank you."

His hand was still extended.

"Oh, my photographs!" she exclaimed suddenly.

"What photographs?"

"I bought some photographs at Alinari's. I must have dropped them out there in the square." She looked at him cautiously. "Would you add to your kindness by fetching them?"

He added to his kindness. As soon as he had turned his back, Lucy arose with the running of a maniac and stole down the arcade towards the Arno.

"Miss Honeychurch!"

She stopped with her hand on her heart.

"You sit still; you aren't fit to go home alone."

"Yes, I am, thank you so very much."

"No, you aren't. You'd go openly if you were."

"But I had rather—"

"Then I don't fetch your photographs."

"I had rather be alone."

He said imperiously: "The man is dead—the man is probably dead; sit down till you are rested." She was bewildered, and obeyed him. "And don't move till I come back."

Following Up

9) Are Neptune, and the satyrs, and the many "deities" in the Loggia living creatures? What are they?

10) In reading this passage, how long did it take you to figure out what the "stream of red" is? What is the name for this literary technique? (See the discussion in Case Study 2.)

11) Comment on this passage: "the palace … fell on to her softly, slowly, noiselessly, and the sky fell with it." What is really happening? Why do you think Forster narrates it in this way?

12) In what way would we as readers respond slightly differently if we read "He turned towards the square to fetch the photographs" rather than "He added to his kindness." What does the use of a phrase such as "Would you add to your kindness…?" suggest about Lucy and her social background?

13) Given their backgrounds, why do you think Lucy might want to escape the attentions of George Emerson?

14) How many of the words and phrases highlighted in yellow do you think it's worth looking up, rather than trying to infer their meaning and moving on? Make your best guess as to the meaning of each:

    Piazza
    Loggia
    cinque lire
    Arcade
    imperiously

15) The first of the two passages above is repeated below, this time with annotations. To what degree do the annotations help you to understand the passage as a whole? To what extent do you find it a distraction to be frequently pausing to checking the note at the bottom of the page? Try to weigh these considerations; on balance, which of the seven footnotes below would you say should be included in an edition of *A Room with a View* that aims at accessibility for twenty-first-century readers?

It was pleasant to wake up in Florence, to open the eyes upon a bright bare room, with a floor of red tiles which look clean though they are not; with a painted ceiling whereon pink griffins and blue amorini[1] sport in a forest of yellow violins and bassoons. It was pleasant, too, to fling wide the windows, pinching the fingers in unfamiliar fastenings, to lean out into sunshine with beautiful hills and trees and marble churches opposite, and close below, the Arno, gurgling against the embankment of the road.

Over the river men were at work with spades and sieves on the sandy foreshore, and on the river was a boat, also diligently employed for some mysterious end. An electric tram came rushing underneath the window. No one was inside it, except one tourist; but its platforms[2] were overflowing with Italians, who preferred to stand. Children tried to hang on behind, and the conductor, with no malice, spat in their faces to make them let go. Then soldiers appeared—good-looking, undersized men—wearing each a knapsack covered with mangy fur, and a great-coat which had been cut for some larger soldier. Beside them walked officers, looking foolish and fierce,[3] and before them went little boys, turning somersaults in time with the band. The tramcar became entangled in their ranks, *and* moved on painfully, like a caterpillar in a swarm of ants. One of the little boys fell down, and some white bullocks came out of an archway. Indeed, if it had not been for the good advice of an old man who was selling button-hooks,[4] the road might never have got clear.

Over such trivialities as these many a valuable hour may slip away, and the traveller who has gone to Italy to study the tactile values of Giotto, or the corruption of the Papacy,[5] may return remembering nothing but the blue sky and the men and women who live under it. So it was as well[6] that Miss Bartlett should tap and come in, and having commented on Lucy's leaving the door unlocked, and on her leaning out of the window before she was fully dressed, should urge her to hasten herself, or the best of the day

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[1] *pink griffins and blue amorini* Griffins and amorini (also known as cherubs) are varieties of mythical creatures; both were often featured in painted scenes during the Italian Renaissance.

[2] *platforms* Running boards on the sides of the streetcar (or *tram*), on which passengers could stand.

[3] *soldiers appeared … foolish and fierce* In the early twentieth century the Italian army had a reputation for lackluster leadership and logistical failures; the army's reputation remained tarnished by its defeat at the hands of the Ethiopians in the Italo–Ethiopian War of 1895–96.

[4] *button-hooks* One the many products commonly sold by street vendors in Italian cities in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; a button hook is a metal tool used to pull buttons through buttonholes. In Victorian times button-hooks were frequently used to facilitate the buttoning of corsets, long gloves, and boots.

[5] *Giotto … papacy* Giotto di Bondone (1267–1337) was a Florence-based painter, known as a pioneer in portraying the human figure more realistically than his medieval predecessors; *corruption of the Papacy* Leo X (1475–1521), a member of Florence's Medici family, was pope from 1513 until his death in 1521. He was known among other things for selling indulgences to those leading sinful lives; anyone who purchased such a document would supposedly be granted reduced time in Purgatory. It was in part as a response to this corrupt practice of Pope Leo X that Martin Luther wrote his *Ninety-Five Theses*, sparking the Protestant Reformation.

[6] *it was as well* It was just as well; it was fortunate.

would be gone. By the time Lucy was ready her cousin had done her breakfast, and was listening to [another guest in the dining room].

A conversation then ensued, on not unfamiliar lines. Miss Bartlett was, after all, a wee bit tired, and thought they had better spend the morning settling in; unless Lucy would at all like to go out? Lucy would rather like to go out, as it was her first day in Florence, but, of course, she could go alone. Miss Bartlett could not allow this. Of course she would accompany Lucy everywhere. Oh, certainly not; Lucy would stop[7] with her cousin. Oh, no! that would never do.

[7] *stop* Stay.